

**Report of the External Review of the Slovenian Quality  
Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA)**

**January 2015**

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyses the extent to which the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA) complies with the European Standards and Guidelines for external quality assurance agencies and thus with the membership criteria of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The report is based on a review process initiated by ENQA at the request of SQAA, applying for Full Membership of ENQA.

The assessment process involved a self-evaluation by SQAA and a two-day site visit in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 17-18 November 2014.

In 2010 SQAA was founded as a public body for external quality assurance of higher education and higher vocational education, although its predecessor, National Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia, has performed quality assurance activities since 1994. Initial accreditations and re-accreditations as well as evaluations are the main activities of the agency, both on a programme and institutional level. An accreditation can be granted for a maximum of seven years. Except for the external quality assurance activities of SQAA, the Slovenian higher education institutions are additionally requested to submit annual self-evaluation reports. This puts a heavy workload on the institutions and the foreseen abolishment of programme re-accreditations, and a focus on institutional level, is welcomed by the panel. Despite the comprehensiveness of the quality assurance activities (required by law) SQAA is appreciated by stakeholders, and should be commended, for its strong developmental component in its reviews.

Overall, SQAA should be described as a well-established quality assurance agency, highly recognized by all stakeholders. Even though the emphasis of the duties of the agency is on accreditations and evaluations, the agency's analytical work in quality assurance related issues is highly appreciated by stakeholders, which would like to see that role of the agency even strengthened.

In light of the evidence provided by the documentation and the interviews at the site visit, the panel considered that SQAA's overall performance against the ESG and ENQA Criteria is high. The panel appreciated the high level of commitment by staff, management and members of the Council. The conclusions in short are:

SQAA complies fully with:  
ESG 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.7 and 2.8  
ESG 3.2, 3.3, 3.6 and 3.8

SQAA complies substantially with  
ESG 2.3, 2.5, 2.6  
ESG 3.1, 3.5, 3.7

SQAA complies partly with:  
ESG 3.4

ENQA Criterion 8: Fully compliant

The panel found that SQAA complied fully or substantially on all ENQA Criterion, except for ENQA Criterion 3, ESG 3.4, where the panel concluded SQAA to be partly compliant. A major concern for the panel is that 60 % of SQAA's budget is covered by European Structural Funds, which expire in August 2015. According to the law, funds for the operation of SQAA should be provided from the state budget. Despite this, the panel is convinced of SQAA's substantial compliance with the ESG and the ENQA membership criteria.

## 2. GLOSSARY

ENQA	The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
HEA	Higher Education Act
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HVC	Higher Vocational College
PVEA	Post-Secondary Vocational Education Act
SER	Self-evaluation report
SQAA	Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
SSU	Slovenian Students Union

### 3. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

This is the report of the review of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA) undertaken by this ENQA review panel from 20 August 2014 to 14 January 2015 for the purpose of determining whether the agency meets the criteria for Full membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The SQAA applied for the first time for ENQA Full membership.

#### 3.1 BACKGROUND AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

The Statutes of ENQA require all agencies that want to become a member to undergo an external review, in order to verify that they fulfil the membership provisions.

In November 2004, the General Assembly of ENQA agreed that the third part of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) should be incorporated into the membership provisions of its regulations. Substantial compliance with the ESG thus became the principal criterion for membership of ENQA. The ESG were subsequently adopted at the Bergen ministerial meeting of the Bologna Process in 2005.

The third part of the ESG covers the cyclical external review of quality assurance and accreditation agencies.

The external review of SQAA was of the type A and conducted in line with the process described in *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area* and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference [Annex 1).

The review panel for the external review of SQAA was composed of the following members:

**Achim Hopbach**, Managing Director, Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria), Austria (Chairman)

**Karin Järplid Linde**, Acting Head of Department, Swedish Higher Education Authority, Sweden (Secretary)

**Milan Pol**, Professor of Education – Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

**Andrejs Rauhvargers**, Professor, University of Latvia, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Arts, Current Secretary General, Latvian Rectors' Council, Latvia (EUA nomination)

**Blazhe Todorovski**, Executive Committee, European Students' Union

Master student in the Faculty of Law; University Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Macedonia (ESU nomination)

SQAA produced a self-evaluation report which, after completion, provided a substantial portion of the evidence that the panel used to form its conclusions. The panel conducted a site-visit to validate fully the self-evaluation and clarify any points at issue. Finally, the review panel produced the present final report on the basis of the self-evaluation report, site-visit and its findings. In doing so it provided an opportunity for SQAA to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report. The review panel confirms that it was given access to all documents and people it wished to consult throughout the review.

### **3.2 THE MAIN FUNCTIONS OF SQAA**

Accreditations and external evaluations are part of the external system of quality assurance in higher education and higher vocational education in Slovenia. They are the fundamental activities of SQAA on which quality assessment of a higher education institution as a whole, an individual study programmes or a higher vocational college is based. The SQAA decides whether an institution or a college complies with standards defined by the law and the agency's criteria.

According to the Slovenian Higher Education Act (HEA), Article 51f, the function of SQAA is to:

- oversee the functioning of the system of quality assurance in higher education and post-secondary professional education,
- determine procedures and criteria for external evaluations and accreditations and other criteria and regulations,
- determine the minimum criteria for election to titles of higher education teachers, scientific workers and higher education staff at higher education institutions,
- carry out external evaluations of higher education institutions and study programmes, and of higher vocational colleges,
- carry out accreditations of higher education institutions and study programmes,
- issue consent to the transformation of higher education institutions and to modifications of compulsory elements of study programmes of independent higher education institutions,
- establish and update the register of experts,
- appoint expert groups for external evaluations and accreditations, organise their training and participate in it,
- make public the decisions of the Agency, evaluation reports, annual evaluation and accreditation reports and analyses of the Agency, which must be transparent and accessible,
- keep publicly accessible records of accredited higher education institutions and study programmes,
- cooperate with higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges, advise them and promote the implementation of self-evaluations,

- cooperate with international institutions or bodies for quality assurance in higher education,
- oversee the conformity of the Agency's operation with EU guidelines and international principles in the field of quality assurance,
- collect and analyse reports on self-evaluations and external evaluations of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges,
- perform development tasks in the field for which it has been established,
- perform other tasks in accordance with this Act and the memorandum of association.

### **Initial accreditation and re-accreditation**

Initial accreditation and re-accreditation can be granted for a maximum of seven years. The accreditation period can be shortened to three years or less. Extraordinary evaluation can also shorten the initial period of seven years. A condition for the re-accreditation is the external evaluation of the higher education institution or study programme, to be carried out before the expiry of accreditation validity. The accreditation procedure includes self-evaluation, an assessment and a report prepared by the expert group, and a decision of the Agency Council on granting the accreditation.

Accreditations are made through:

#### *Initial accreditation of higher education study programmes*

A group of experts carries out the assessment of the application. Coordination is made via e-mail or telephone. No meeting or site visit (only in exceptional cases) takes place. A report is prepared.

#### *Initial accreditation of higher education institutions*

A group of experts carry out an *inspection* of the HEIs' premises. Focus is on equipment etc. The experts verify compliance with criteria and they prepare a joint report. The HEIs has no possibility to respond to the report. However, the expert group presents its findings at the end of site visit. On the basis of this information, the HEIs can supplement or amend the application before decision at the Agency Council is made.

#### *Re-accreditation of higher education study programmes*

A group of experts carries out the assessment of the application and a self-evaluation report. Site visit is obligatory. An evaluation report is prepared. The report is sent to the applicant for eventual comments.

#### *Re-accreditation of higher education institutions*

The process is similar to the procedure of re-accreditation of a study programme. Special attention is given to the institutions quality system or self-evaluation procedures. A site visit is obligatory and the expert group prepares an evaluation report.

#### *Evaluation of higher vocational colleges*

Vocational colleges have to undergo external evaluation every five years. The process is similar to the re-accreditation of a HEI. Site visit is obligatory and the areas of assessment are the same. However, the expert group needs to pay



extra attention to the characteristics of vocational studies, i.e. the practical parts and how the programmes connect with future employers of the students.

#### *Extraordinary evaluation*

These evaluations are initiated by the Agency Council in cases of clear grounds for believing that major breaches with the accreditation criteria occurred in the operation of a HEI, a vocational college or a study programme. Extraordinary evaluation is carried out the same way as the respective external evaluation processes for HEIs and vocational colleges.

#### **Criteria for assessment<sup>1</sup>**

The assessment of the quality of a higher education institution or a higher vocational college is made in the following areas:

- integration with the environment, (cooperation with business and non-business sector, employment opportunities for students)
- functioning of the higher education institution,
- human resources,
- students,
- material conditions,
- quality assurance, innovation and development orientation.

Additionally, the study programmes are assessed with regard to:

- The need for a study programme
- Organization and provision of education

### **3.3 STRUCTURE OF SQAA**

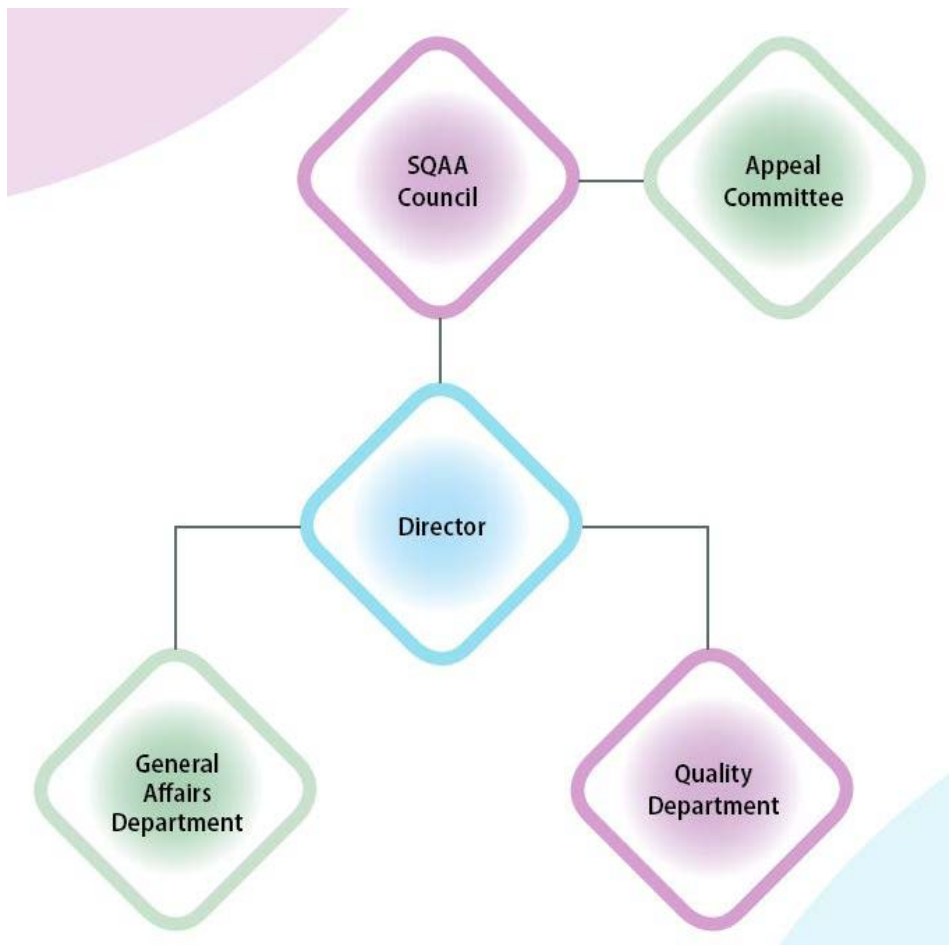
From 1994 to 2010, the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes was the responsibility of the National Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia; an independent professional body composed of experts in the field of higher education.

In the spring of 2010, the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA) was founded as a public body for quality assurance of higher education.

The Agency consists of three bodies: the Agency Council as the decision-making body of the first instance, the Appeal Committee as the decision-making body of the second instance, and the Director.

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed descriptions of the criteria used in each accreditation or evaluation activity is presented in *Criteria for the accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes*, adopted by the Council on 15 May 2014.



### Agency Council

is the highest decision-making body of SQAA. According to the HEA, the Agency Council:

- sets out the procedures and criteria for external evaluations and accreditations and other criteria in cooperation with stakeholders;
- decides on accreditations of higher education institutions and study programmes;
- adopts opinions on higher vocational colleges;
- appoints expert groups for accreditations and external evaluations;
- determines conditions, modes and forms of transnational higher education;
- sets out the procedures and criteria for internal quality assurance in Agency's operations and its external evaluation in accordance with ESG;
- appoints and dismisses the Director of the Agency, members of the Appeal Committee, and carries out other tasks in accordance with the law.

The Council works according to *Rules of Procedure of the Agency Council*. The Council adopts decisions on regular sessions once a month.

### Director

represents and acts on behalf of the Agency, organises and manages activities and operations of the Agency and makes decisions regarding the labour law rights of the employees. The Director is responsible for the implementation of

decisions adopted by the Agency Council and carries out other duties in accordance with the law.

### **Appeal Committee**

decides on appeals against decisions adopted by the Agency Council in the procedures for accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes. The Appeal Committee is appointed by the Council on the basis of a public call. It consists of three members; each member has an alternate. It works in accordance with the *Rules of Procedures of the Appeal Committee*.

## **3.4 THE PLACE OF SQAA IN ITS JURISDICTION**

### **Register for institutions and programmes**

All public and private higher education institutions must be accredited and entered into the register of higher education institutions at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports to be able to issue the publicly recognized qualifications. Every year the government decides which study programmes and how many enrolment places are financed for regular studies.

According to the data of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (June 2014) there are 4 universities and 42 private higher education institutions on the register. According to the same source, there are 924 accredited programmes on the register.

Data from the Association of Slovene Higher Vocational Colleges Secretariat, reveals that there are 43 higher vocational colleges operating in the Republic of Slovenia.

## **3.5 HOW THE REVIEW WAS CARRIED OUT**

### *Self-evaluation report*

The panel received a self-evaluation report (SER) produced by SQAA, of 95 pages including two annexed documents as well as a list of another 14 clickable annexes. The SER was prepared by a project group at SQAA and approved by the Agency Council at its 62<sup>nd</sup> session on 13 March 2013.

The panel notes that the SER provided by SQAA challenged the experts in the preparation for the review. Different from most of the agencies' reviews the SER was not particularly written in order to serve as basis for the external review. It was part of the agency's regular developmental work and consisted of a general self-evaluation which was not linked to ESG and a self-evaluation against the ESG which, however, was more a follow-up report on actions taken as consequence of a previous external evaluation of the agency. Because of significant lack of description and evidence this report could not serve as basis for the review. Hence, a supplementary report was requested from the agency. On the one hand side it might be considered commendable that the preparation for an external review forms part of the regular internal quality assurance and

developmental work of an agency. However, losing out of sight the needs of a review panel in terms of evidence unnecessarily complicates a review. The panel found this way of proceeding surprising because of its contrast to the high level of professionalism in the agency's own reviews.

#### *Site visit*

The panel visited the offices of SQAA in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 17-18 November 2014. Before this, the panel held a telephone briefing chaired by the ENQA Secretariat on 20 October 2014 and a preparatory meeting the day before the site visit to further discuss the SER and the lines of inquiry. A preliminary list with lines of inquiry had been circulated between the panel members before this meeting.

Due to the particularity of the SER, the site visit became a very important part of the review. The SQAA should be commended for a very well organised site visit. The panel was convinced that the scope and level of the site visit programme (annex 2 of this report) provided relevant information for the review. The SQAA offered strong organisational support prior and during the visit. The panel was provided with all necessary information and access to additional documents. Furthermore, SQAA's support regarding the logistical organisation, transport, accommodation and meals, was of very high quality.

#### *Concluding the report*

During the visit the panel discussed the SQAA compliance with each of the ESG and ENQA membership criterion. They reached a high degree of consensus on each criterion separately. After the site visit, the review secretary prepared an initial outline report in cooperation with chair and panel members. It was submitted to SQAA for factual comments on its accuracy.

After receiving comments from SQAA, further revision of the report was agreed between Review Chair and Review Secretary, in consultation with the panel. The final report was submitted by the Review Secretary to the panel, the ENQA Secretariat and to the SQAA.

### **3.7 HIGHER EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA<sup>2</sup>**

Tertiary education in Slovenia consists of short-cycle higher vocational education and higher education. Since 2012, both domains are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Both subsystems of tertiary education are interrelated. Upon fulfilling certain conditions, students may transfer from short-cycle higher vocational study programmes to first cycle higher education study programmes. At higher education there are university (academic) studies and more practice oriented professional studies.

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<sup>2</sup> The main parts of this chapter are taken from:

- Eurydice – Eurobase Descriptions of National Education Systems and Policies  
- Self-evaluation report of SQAA

### **Short-Cycle Higher Vocational Education**

The short-cycle higher vocational education in Slovenia is specified by the Higher Vocational Education Act (2004). It is provided by both public and private higher vocational colleges. The practice orientated programmes extend over 2 years and emerge out of actual economic staffing needs. The students develop vocational competences in accordance to vocational standards. Short cycle higher vocational education in Slovenia has been interrelating increasingly to the international environment and the law states explicitly that the vocational standards and study programmes shall be comparable at the European level.

### **Higher Education**

Higher education in Slovenia is provided by law, i.e. the Higher Education Act<sup>3</sup>. The studies are organised by both public and private universities, and other higher education institutions, such as faculties, art academies, and higher vocational colleges. Large universities can also incorporate semi-autonomous faculties.

Private faculties and art academies, and public and private higher vocational colleges may be established as autonomous higher education institutions that may further form an association of higher education institutions. Under special conditions, it is allowed to form an international association of universities.

All higher education institutions may, besides degree programmes, also carry out non-degree supplementary study programmes of lifelong learning. Various forms of informal teaching may also be organized, for example: short courses, summer schools, training programmes, and the like. In such cases, collaboration is arranged with other partners from higher education, higher vocational education or the business sector.

### **Three cycle higher education system**

The amended HEA of 2004 and 2006 constitutes the legal framework for the implementation of a three cycle higher education system.

The first cycle study programmes or bachelor degree programmes are academic or professional. The second cycle offers master programmes, which commonly focus on education and training for occupations or professions. Third cycle offers PhD programmes. Joint study programmes are enabled within all cycles.

Universities, faculties, and art academies may provide study programmes of all cycles. Higher professional institutions provide, as a rule, the first cycle programmes (undergraduate); if they meet special stipulations, they may provide the second cycle programmes (graduate).

The entry requirements are provided by law provisionally, in detail they are specified for a given study programme.

### **Number of students**

There were 90 622 students enrolled in all higher education courses at universities and at independent private higher education institutions, academic year 2013/2014. During the same period 13 251 students enrolled in higher

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<sup>3</sup> In Slovenia, the Higher Education Act is usually revised and amended after each change of government.

vocational colleges. Over the years, there has been a decline in total number of students, partly due to a decrease in number of part time students.

## 4. FINDINGS

The compliance of SQAA with the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) is considered in relation to the criteria for membership of ENQA. Referring to each criterion paragraphs consist of the corresponding ESG standard quoted, the evidence used and their appraisal as well as a concluding assessment by the Panel concerning the level of compliance (fully compliant, substantially compliant, partly compliant or not compliant).

### **4.1 ENQA CRITERION 1a: ESG Part 2: External quality assurance processes**

*Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institution or programme level) on a regular basis. The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the ESG. The external quality assurance activities may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation, or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the member.*

#### **ESG 2.1 USE OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES**

**STANDARD:**

External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

**GUIDELINES:**

The standards for internal quality assurance contained in Part 1 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. It is important that the institutions' own internal policies and procedures are carefully evaluated in the course of external procedures, to determine the extent to which the standards are being met. If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external processes might be less intensive than otherwise.

#### **Evidence**

According to the Slovenian Higher Education act (HEA) and the Post-secondary Vocational Education Act (PVEA), the quality of a higher education institution, a

higher vocational college<sup>4</sup> or a higher education programme shall be assessed by the institutions themselves through self-evaluation on a yearly basis, and by SQAA through external accreditation and evaluation. Evaluations of vocational colleges are performed every five years. The law also stipulates that the findings of the self-evaluation reports and the external evaluations should be considered in the re-accreditation process of higher education institutions and their study programmes.

The areas to be covered in accreditations are laid down in SQAA accreditation criteria<sup>5</sup>. In initial accreditations, SQAA assesses whether the higher education institution has in place an internal quality assurance system according to established criteria<sup>6</sup> and in re-accreditations, the external evaluation focuses on determining progress and development since last accreditation.

One of the criteria relates to the requirements in law, which requires annual self-evaluation procedures at the institutions. These self-evaluations are collected by SQAA and serve the purpose of establishing the state of quality in the Slovenian higher education area.

According to the SQAA self-evaluation report (SER), more focus on the functioning of the institutions internal quality assurance systems is foreseen, which is one component of the shift towards institutional accreditations and evaluations to reduce the burden of external quality assurance. These changes are in accordance with proposed amendments of the HEA.

## **Analysis**

The panel is convinced that the external quality assurance activities of SQAA have a clear focus on the institutions own internal policies and procedures for quality assurance. Various stakeholders at the site visit confirmed that the results of an institutions' internal quality assurance system play an important role in SQAA reviews. The evaluation model as such also implies such an approach, since the HEA, PVEA and the SQAA criteria require that the functioning and the development of the internal quality assurance procedures since last accreditation, is taken into account in the following review. It's worth mentioning that SQAA's procedures in this respect go further than many other accreditation procedures by way of not only requiring internal quality assurance mechanisms being in place and by way of not only taking a snapshot on the current situation but rather focusing on the recent and current developments in the institutions.

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<sup>4</sup> Hereinafter, the term »institutions« is used when referring to both higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges

<sup>5</sup> Criteria for Accreditation and External Evaluation: Integration with the environment; functioning of the higher education institution; human resources; students; material conditions; quality assurance, innovation and development orientation.

<sup>6</sup> In initial accreditation, the establishment of an institutions internal quality assurance system is assessed through: regular collection and analysis of data on the learning outcomes of students and overall education and other related activities; inclusion of all staff, students and other stakeholders in assessing the quality of performance; identification of weaknesses in the implementation of activities and deviations from planned activities and achievements; regular informing of students and other stakeholders regarding the measures to improve quality; the planning of periodic self-evaluations



This fosters a developmental approach to quality assurance and strongly supports the institutions' internal quality assurance activities. SQAA is to be commended for this approach.

Furthermore, the annual self-evaluations, produced by the institutions, give valuable information to the SQAA in the accreditation process about the recent developments within the institutions. However, the panel noticed an extensive amount of data for the institutions to be submitted every year in the annual self-evaluation reports, due to the legal requirements. Information at the site visit revealed an upcoming data system for the gathering of this data, which will simplify processes. Despite this, the panel wants to stress that efforts should remain not to interfere more than necessary with normal work of the institutions, thus making sure the actual use of collected data. Therefore SQAA should care for an efficient reporting procedure, i.e. by providing the institutions with guidelines which would also help the agency to make as much use of the information gathered.

The panel also welcomes the intentions to move towards institutional accreditation, in order to reduce the number of accreditation activities towards the institutions. This shift would also be in line with the agency's intentions of increased focus on the institutions internal quality assurance activities. These intentions were also confirmed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and welcomed by stakeholders at the site visit.

The site visit clarified that the legal requirements does not permit for a less intense external quality assurance procedure in case of evidence of well-functioning internal quality procedures at an institution.

Finally, the panel would like to commend the agency for its numerous activities and ambitious efforts to support the institutions in their development of internal quality assurance processes. Beside informal contacts between SQAA and the institutions meetings, workshops and conferences are being held for this purpose.

### ***Recommendations***

SQAA might wish to provide institutions with more guidance for the preparation of the annual self-evaluation reports in order to cater for a more efficient integration into the agency's activities.

### ***Conclusion***

Standard fulfilment: Fully compliant

## **ESG 2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES**

### **STANDARD:**

The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible

(including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

#### **GUIDELINES:**

In order to ensure clarity of purpose and transparency of procedures, external quality assurance methods should be designed and developed through a process involving key stakeholders, including higher education institutions. The procedures that are finally agreed should be published and should contain explicit statements of the aims and objectives of the processes as well as a description of the procedures to be used. As external quality assurance makes demands on the institutions involved, a preliminary impact assessment should be undertaken to ensure that the procedures to be adopted are appropriate and do not interfere more than necessary with the normal work of higher education institutions.

### ***Evidence***

The framework and the procedures for external quality assurance in Slovenia are defined in HEA<sup>7</sup>. In line with the same act, the criteria for external evaluations and accreditations are defined and adopted by the SQAA Council.

According to the SQAA self-evaluation, all stakeholders, such as HEIs, students, relevant ministries, employers, unions and experts were invited to comment on and propose amendments to the criteria, both in their adoption but also in the subsequent changes. In 2013 there were two amendments of the criteria, and last revision was made in May/June 2014, following recommendations from previous external evaluation of the SQAA to remove inconsistencies and duplications in the criteria.

The criteria, along with other information about the procedures (such as a manual for experts and a formula for application of accreditation), are publicly available on the SQAA web site. There is also a FAQ section on the web, regarding the criteria and the application formula.

### ***Analysis***

The interviews at the site visit confirmed and convinced the panel about broad stakeholder involvement in the development and amendments of the evaluation criteria. In addition, annual surveys are carried out by SQAA, where stakeholders have the possibility to comment on the comprehensibility and applicability of the criteria. The outcomes of these surveys are taken into consideration in the following revision of the criteria. Furthermore, stakeholders at the site visit showed satisfaction on the SQAA's proactive approach, involving them in workshops and meetings regarding the criteria and evaluation procedures in general. The panel observed particular improvements in the work of SQAA in this respect during the last years and wants to commend the agency for intense and comprehensive interaction with stakeholders.

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<sup>7</sup> SQAA self-evaluation report

## **Conclusion**

Standard fulfilment: Fully compliant

## **ESG 2.3 CRITERIA FOR DECISIONS**

### **STANDARD:**

Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

### **GUIDELINES:**

Formal decisions made by quality assurance agencies have a significant impact on the institutions and programmes that are judged. In the interests of equity and reliability, decisions should be based on published criteria and interpreted in a consistent manner. Conclusions should be based on recorded evidence and agencies should have in place ways of moderating conclusions, if necessary.

## **Evidence**

The accreditation criteria and other documents related to the accreditation procedures are publicly available and published on the SQAA website.

Documentation from the SQAA also shows that the experts use a template for the reports, where reference is made to the accreditation criteria. All accreditation decisions are made by the SQAA Council, based on the published criteria. Before decisions are made, the expert reports are sent to the institutions for comments.

To assure consistency in the accreditation processes, the SQAA refers to a number of measures, such as:

- the training of experts, staff and Council members
- a quality manual for the SQAA procedures
- a manual for experts describing the different external quality assurance activities
- the participation of staff during site visits
- an appeal system
- surveys to stakeholders to ensure continuous improvement of the procedures

Furthermore, the SQAA is currently drafting guidelines on the interpretation of the accreditation criteria, in areas of assessment that are perceived as difficult, such as human resources, scientific and research work and integration with the environment.

## **Analysis**

The site visit confirmed to the panel that there are several measures taken by the SQAA in order to assure consistent interpretation of criteria. However, the

repeated changes of the criteria over time (three changes during past two years) somewhat hinders a consistent interpretation. Furthermore, as mentioned in the SQAA SER more efforts have to be made since within the agency a lack of joint understanding and interpretation between staff and Council members was reported. The panel would like to stress the importance of strengthening the SQAA efforts in developing a shared understanding of the criteria, for all parties involved. Therefore the panel also welcomes the intentions in this direction mentioned at the site visit, which include publishing interpretations of criteria and to have further discussions involving agency staff, Council members as well as experts and institutions. The recently published analysis of negative outcomes in the SQAA decisions is also an important contribution to these discussions. Different analyses of reports and decisions might also be used as a tool for deepened understanding of different roles and responsibilities between agency staff, Council members and experts.

### ***Recommendation***

SQAA should strengthen its efforts to develop a shared understanding of criteria by developing and publishing official interpretation of certain criteria and regulations.

### ***Conclusion***

Standard fulfilment: Substantially compliant

## **ESG 2.4 PROCESSES FIT FOR PURPOSE**

### **STANDARD:**

All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

### **GUIDELINES:**

Quality assurance agencies within the EHEA undertake different external processes for different purposes and in different ways. It is of the first importance that agencies should operate procedures which are fit for their own defined and published purposes. Experience has shown, however, that there are some widely-used elements of external review processes which not only help to ensure their validity, reliability and usefulness, but also provide a basis for the European dimension to quality assurance. Amongst these elements the following are particularly noteworthy:

- insistence that the experts undertaking the external quality assurance activity have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task;
- the exercise of care in the selection of experts;
- the provision of appropriate briefing or training for experts;
- the use of international experts;
- participation of students;
- ensuring that the review procedures used are sufficient to provide adequate evidence to support the findings and conclusions reached;
- the use of the self-evaluation/site visit/draft report/published report/follow-up model of review;

- recognition of the importance of institutional improvement and enhancement policies as a fundamental element in the assurance of quality.

## **Evidence**

### *Experts*

According to the HEA, article 51z, the SQAA should keep a register for experts engaged in the accreditation and evaluation activities. SQAA has established publicly available criteria for entry in the register<sup>8</sup>. Candidates are nominated through public calls or through invitation by the Council. All experts are approved by the Council before entry on the register. Student experts are nominated by the Slovenian student organisation, SSU. All experts sign a non-conflict of interest statement.

According to the self-evaluation<sup>9</sup> and confirmed by the interviews during the site visit, SQAA conducted several specific training activities for experts as well as regular annual meetings which serve broader purposes around information about current developments among which gathering feedback on the criteria and regulations from the experts is deemed to be very important. The site visit revealed that training of student experts is done by both SSU (in agreement with the SQAA) and by the agency.

According to SQAA criteria for its accreditation and evaluation activities<sup>10</sup>, each panel should consist of at least three members of whom at least one should be a foreign expert and one a student. The agency staff participates at site visits and experts use a template for writing their reports, making sure of that all evaluation criteria are dealt with. The template also gives room for experts to express their findings and opinions that goes beyond the defined criteria.

### *Review Procedures*

The review procedures include the following steps: application for accreditation, self-evaluation report, site visit (except for initial programme accreditation) draft report, report sent to the institutions for comments, accreditation decision by the Council, publication of the report (except for the case of negative initial programme accreditation) and to some extent follow-up. The published report provides information about fulfilment of each accreditation criteria according to a report template. Beside the application for accreditation including the self-evaluation report, the SQAA also uses the institution's regular annual self-evaluation reports as evidence in the accreditation process.

The reviews particularly focus on the developments within institutions and programmes by way of taking into account the annual self-evaluation reports of the years since the last review had taken place.

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<sup>8</sup> SQAA supplement to self-evaluation report, p.6, Annex: *Criteria for Entry in the Register of Experts*

<sup>9</sup> SQAA self-evaluation report, p. 41-42

<sup>10</sup> *Criteria for the accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes*, adopted by the Council of SQAA at its 79th session on 15 May 2014.

The activities of the SQAA are laid down in the HEA, article 51f (functions of the Agency)<sup>11</sup>. Apart from the external quality assurance activities of the agency, the law also states that agency should conduct development and advisory work within the field of higher education.

### ***Analysis***

After the interviews at the site visit, the panel is convinced about the SQAA care in its appointment and training of experts. The panel especially wants to commend the SQAA for the extensive training of students and for the inclusion of students in all its activities. The panel, as well as stakeholders at the site visit, also appreciates the use of foreign experts, in order to avoid conflict of interest and to get inspiration and new perspectives from neighbouring countries.

The self-evaluation report and also the discussions during the site visit revealed some cases of lack of clarity as regards the division of labour between the Council members and SQAA staff in particular but not only, in practically preparing the Council's decisions. Special attention needs to be taken towards this in order to make the different roles and responsibilities clear and explicit to all parties involved.

The double mission of the agency, to control towards predefined criteria and to contribute to the enhancement and development of the institutions, is present in the SQAA activities. There is a clear vision to contribute to the institutions own quality assurance activities within the accreditation and evaluation procedures, which was also confirm by stakeholders. In interviews, the panel also noticed stakeholders interest and wishes for even increased focus on developmental and analytical activities of the SQAA. The panel believes that these activities are an important part of the work of the SQAA and therefore welcomes a shift from programme to institutional accreditation, which would give the agency more room for developmental and analytical tasks.

### ***Recommendation***

SQAA should clarify better the different roles and responsibilities to all parties involved in preparing the Council's decisions.

### ***Conclusion***

Standard fulfilment: Fully compliant

## **ESG 2.5 REPORTING**

### **STANDARD:**

Reports should be published and should be written in a style which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

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<sup>11</sup> SQAA self-evaluation report, Annex 3

**GUIDELINES:**

In order to ensure maximum benefit from external quality assurance processes, it is important that reports should meet the identified needs of the intended readership. Reports are sometimes intended for different readership groups and this will require careful attention to structure, content, style and tone. In general, reports should be structured to cover description, analysis (including relevant evidence), conclusions, commendations, and recommendations. There should be sufficient preliminary explanation to enable a lay reader to understand the purposes of the review, its form, and the criteria used in making decisions. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations should be easily locatable by readers. Reports should be published in a readily accessible form and there should be opportunities for readers and users of the reports (both within the relevant institution and outside it) to comment on their usefulness.

**Evidence**

The HEA stipulates in Article 51f, that the SQAA should publish the decisions as well as the evaluation and accreditation reports. According to the self-evaluation, all decisions made by the Council as well as the accreditation and evaluation reports are published on the SQAA website except for negative decisions in initial programme accreditation and the respective reports.

In order to assure consistency of expert reports, experts are provided with both a manual which gives detailed information about the manner of writing reports and also a template for the report as such. For each criterion the experts should give evidence, assess strengths, opportunities for improvement and whether there are any aspects of non-compliance. The template also gives room for a broader analysis of the strengths and opportunities for improvement.

In order to stress and preserve the external part of the evaluation process, the SQAA staff is not actively involved in the drafting of the experts' reports.

**Analysis**

During interviews at the site visit, the panel was convinced of the activities of the SQAA contributing to the development of internal quality assurance procedures at the institutions. However, the panel has difficulties stating whether this is due to informative reports as such, or to the totality of agency activities leading to a continuous dialogue with the institutions. Stakeholders in general seemed neutral to the accreditation and evaluation reports. As stated previously, the published analyses are highly appreciated and Ministry as well as other stakeholders would like to see more of that kind of reporting from the SQAA.

The fact that negative decisions and its underlying reports in initial programme accreditation are not published is on the one hand side not in line with this standard. On the other hand side the panel acknowledges that there is no public interest in this information because these programmes are not offered.

**Conclusion**

Standard fulfilment: Substantially compliant

## ESG 2.6 FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES

### STANDARD:

Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

### GUIDELINES:

Quality assurance is not principally about individual external scrutiny events: It should be about continuously trying to do a better job. External quality assurance does not end with the publication of the report and should include a structured follow-up procedure to ensure that recommendations are dealt with appropriately and any required action plans drawn up and implemented. This may involve further meetings with institutional or programme representatives. The objective is to ensure that areas identified for improvement are dealt with speedily and that further enhancement is encouraged.

### **Evidence**

Initial accreditation and re-accreditation is granted for a maximum of seven years. The progress made by the institution since its last accreditation is monitored in the re-accreditation process. According to the criteria, progress and development since the last accreditation in all areas of assessment shall be assessed, but primarily the internal quality system of the institution<sup>12</sup>. In institutional re-accreditations, all universities are called to prepare action plans for future development and improvement.

Follow-up is included in cases when accreditations are extended for a limited period of time. In these cases the experts evaluates whether the institution has remedied the inconsistencies according to the recommendations given in the previous evaluation.

### **Analysis**

The panel concluded that in general no formal follow-up procedures are part of the regular reviews. The only element of a follow-up procedure that is in place is that SQAA requests the institutions to draw action plans as result of the external reviews. However, no further steps are taken in order to monitor the follow-up of the institutions. Nevertheless, there are surprisingly many activities performed by the agency which in reality gives the SQAA various opportunities to follow up on the activities of the institutions. This is due to the annual self-evaluation written by the institutions as well as the many programme re-accreditations which touch upon many of the criteria at an institutional level. Hence, SQAA gets almost a yearly update on actions taken as a follow-up of the previous reviews.

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<sup>12</sup> *Criteria for the accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes*, adopted by the Council of SQAA at its 79th session on 15 May 2014, criteria for re-accreditation, Article 21.



In conclusion, the panel found out that, although not formalized as part of the reviews, follow-up activities are in place.

The panel notes that if the SQAA, as proposed, in the future will only be performing institutional re-accreditations, this quasi-follow-up system will vanish. Hence, a formalized follow-up activity as regular part of the reviews needs to be taken into consideration.

### **Recommendation**

SQAA should establish a formalized follow-up procedure as regular part of the reviews. This is particularly important if the move to institutional reviews only materializes.

### **Conclusion**

Standard fulfilment: Substantially compliant

## **ESG 2.7 PERIODIC REVIEWS**

### **STANDARD:**

External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

### **GUIDELINES:**

Quality assurance is not a static but a dynamic process. It should be continuous and not "once in a lifetime". It does not end with the first review or with the completion of the formal follow-up procedure. It has to be periodically renewed. Subsequent external reviews should take into account progress that has been made since the previous event. The process to be used in all external reviews should be clearly defined by the external quality assurance agency and its demands on institutions should not be greater than are necessary for the achievement of its objectives.

### **Evidence**

According to the HEA accreditations are valid for a maximum of 7 years for higher education institutions, and 5 years for higher vocational colleges, according to the PVEA. However, accreditations can be limited to three years or less. Extraordinary evaluations can be performed at any point during the accreditation period, based on information from stakeholders or findings in follow-up procedures. Consequently, extraordinary evaluations can shorten the initial accreditation period of seven years.

The proposed amendments of the HEA, anticipates shortening the accreditation period from 7 to 5 years. This is considered as a kind of compensation for the intended abolition of programme re-accreditations. According to the SQAA self-evaluation, the institutional re-accreditations are then intended to also cover self-evaluation of study programmes.

## ***Analysis***

The panel observes that the actual period between accreditations at the moment is seven years.

As mentioned previously, taking into account progress made since the previous review is a particular feature of SQAA's reviews since the criteria refer to these developments and also the regular annual self-evaluation reports of the institutions are taken into account.

The panel would like to emphasize that the fact that criteria for programme accreditation also cover several institutional aspects the universities are faced with constant reviews in this respect, through the programme accreditations undertaken within the cycle of the institutional accreditation. This is to be considered an unnecessary burden. The panel therefore welcomes the initiative to abolish the programme accreditations and to shorten the institutional accreditations to a five year cycle. However, as stated previously, formal follow-up procedures would also need to be included.

## ***Conclusion***

Standard fulfilment: Fully compliant

## **ESG 2.8 SYSTEM-WIDE ANALYSES**

### **STANDARD:**

Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments, etc.

### **GUIDELINES:**

All external quality assurance agencies collect a wealth of information about individual programmes and/or institutions and this provides material for structured analyses across whole higher education systems. Such analyses can provide very useful information about developments, trends, emerging good practice and areas of persistent difficulty or weakness and can become useful tools for policy development and quality enhancement. Agencies should consider including a research and development function within their activities, to help them extract maximum benefit from their work.

## ***Evidence***

At the end of 2013, the SQAA published its first system wide analysis based on HEIs self-evaluation reports and reports from expert panels, covering the period of 2010-2013. Previous analyses of the Slovenian higher education area have been published by the predecessors of the SQAA, which made it possible for the SQAA to bridge with findings from the period 2007-2009 in their analysis.

According to the SQAA self-evaluation, the agency will continue to perform and publish periodic analysis every two years. These are intended to have more of a thematic approach, dealing with such as transnational higher education, e-learning or student's hands on work experience during their studies. A new system wide analysis, of the more general kind focusing on the institutions self-evaluations and reports from expert panels, is foreseen to be published after another accreditation period has expired, i.e. in five to seven years.

### ***Analysis***

The panel gets the impression of a strong position for the SQAA in this field. During its third year since establishment, the SQAA has published a system wide analysis and according to plans, it will continue to do so on a regular basis. The interviews at site visit showed a widespread appreciation and interest from stakeholders for these analyses. Stakeholders, including Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, welcome further initiatives in this direction. The panel commends SQAA for a very sound system-wide analysis and the strong position as source of expertise in the Slovenian higher education system.

### ***Conclusion***

Standard fulfilment: Fully compliant

## **4.1 ENQA CRITERION 1b: ESG 3.1, 3.3: Activities**

### **ESG 3.1 USE OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

#### *Standard*

The external quality assurance agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance procedures described in Part 2 of the European Standard and Guidelines.

#### *Guidelines*

The standards for external quality assurance contained in Part 2 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. The standards reflect best practices and experiences gained through the development of external quality assurance in Europe since the early 1990s. It is therefore important that these standards are integrated into the processes applied by external quality assurance agencies towards the higher education institutions. The standards for external quality assurance should together with the standards for external quality assurance agencies constitute the basis for professional and credible external quality assurance of higher education institutions.

### **Evidence**

ENQA criterion 1, and the assessment of the SQAA compliance to ESG 2.1-2.8, include a number of recommendations and reflections, which are described in the above sections.

### **Analysis**

Considering that the SQAA is a fairly young agency, established in 2010, the panel acknowledges SQAA as a well-respected and committed agency, with ambitions sometimes ahead of the present legal framework. In order to get a fully balanced national quality assurance system, including both the internal work of the institutions and the external quality assurance activities performed by the SQAA, it is the panel's impression that the legal framework is a hindrance in this direction. There is a proposal from the agency to balance the perceived accreditation overload, moving from program to institutional re-accreditation. This would however demand legal changes.

The panel wants to recognise and commend the agency for doing the most out of the restraints within the legal framework. Taking this into account, the Agency is broadly recognized as contributing to the quality culture in the Slovenian higher education area. Although the panel indicates a number of areas for improvement in relation to Part 2 of the ESG, the panel is convinced that the external quality assurance activities of the agency take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the ESG satisfactorily.

SQAA complies fully with ESG 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.7 and 2.8

SQAA complies substantially with ESG 2.3, 2.5, 2.6

### **Conclusion**

Standard fulfilment: Substantially compliant

## **ESG 3.3 ACTIVITIES**

#### **STANDARD:**

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.

#### **GUIDELINES:**

These may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the agency.

### **Evidence**

External quality assurance activities on institutional and programme level are the main activities of the agency. The SQAA perform initial accreditations, re-accreditations as well as extraordinary evaluations of higher education

institutions or their study programmes on all three cycles. The SQAA also performs evaluations of higher vocational colleges.

The HEA, Article 51, gives a description of the organisation of the SQAA, its accreditation and evaluation activities as well as other functions of the agency, such as performing analytical and developmental tasks within the field of higher education, to cooperate internationally with bodies for quality assurance and to oversee the conformity of the SQAA's operations with international principles and standards (cf. section 3.2, The main functions of SQAA).

### **Applications received and decisions made**

In 2013, a total of 197 applications on accreditations and evaluations were received. Of those were:

- 123 applications for accreditation of higher education study programmes
- 15 applications for evaluation of higher vocational colleges
- 59 applications for study programme modifications

Furthermore, 150 accreditation decisions were adopted by the Council. The majority of those were re-accreditations of study programmes.

Accreditation was not granted to five study programmes, and two private higher education institutions. In 13 cases, re-accreditation was granted for a shorter period than 7 years.

The SQAA also performs extraordinary evaluations, in cases where the SQAA Council gets indications of dysfunctions in the operations of an institution or a programme. Two extraordinary evaluations were conducted in 2013.

### **Analysis**

It is obvious that SQAA performs external quality assurance activities on a regular basis.

### **Conclusion**

Standard fulfilment: Fully compliant

## **4.1 ENQA CRITERION 2: ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS**

### **STANDARD:**

Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

### **Evidence**

The SQAA was established in 2010 with the resolution on the Founding of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 114/2009). The SQAA is a non-governmental quality assurance agency, publicly funded as a "direct budget user" which means that the agency has its own budget as part of the national budget. Its functions are established in the HEA, Article 51f.

### **Analysis**

The SQAA is officially recognised as a legal entity under public law. Its organisation and responsibilities is legally established in the HEA (cf 3.2, The main functions of SQAA). The SQAA is responsible for the external quality assurance of higher education institutions, their individual study programmes or a higher vocational college. The agency decides whether an institution or a college complies with standards defined by the law and the SQAA criteria.

The interviews at site visit confirmed that the SQAA has an established legal basis for its activities. It is noteworthy that, although SQAA has its own budget up until now the agency was to more than half funded by European Structural Funds.

### **Conclusion**

Standard fulfilment: Fully compliant

## **ENQA CRITERION 3: ESG 3.4 RESOURCES**

### **STANDARD:**

Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

### **Evidence**

The number of SQAA staff is currently 24. The agency is renting 900 m<sup>2</sup> in the center of Ljubljana, with room for 30 working places. There are annual individual staff-management meetings and staff development activities.

The SQAA is established as "a direct budget user", which means that the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports is not financially responsible, in order for the agency to have an independent financial status. The SQAA negotiates its budget directly with the Ministry of Finance.

According to the HEA, Article 51m, funds for the operation of SQAA should be provided from the state budget. However, at present the SQAA is partially funded

with European Structural Funds (60 %) while the Republic of Slovenia covers 40 % of SQAA budget. The total budget for 2014 is approximately 1.8 million EUR. The EU funds will come to an end in August 2015. Until then all financial, human and material resources are guaranteed.

### **Analysis**

As regards funding the panel learned that the annual budgets have been sufficient to assure not only the conduction of reviews but also the developmental and analytical work of the agency. However, the panel considers it as a point of major concern that approximately 60% of the budget is currently covered by European Structural Funds, which expire in August 2015. Translated into staffing this means that 14 out of 24 staff have project funded contracts. Although there was a general commitment of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports to support the agency in its negotiations with the Ministry of Finance, the panel has to conclude that the financial situation of the agency is at risk. Up until the site visit no confirmation of compensation by the state budget in case the European Structural funds expire were reported. It is therefore difficult to conclude on this criterion. On the one hand the law stipulates governmental funding of the SQAA activities and in case the Ministry of Finance steps in, the financial situation of SQAA should be fully acceptable. On the other hand, the national context needs to be taken into consideration. The use of European Structural funds has been a creative way of finding solutions in a difficult situation for the economy of Slovenia. Charging the HEIs fees was also mentioned at the site visit as a possible solution in financing SQAA external quality assurance.

Taking the different aspects of the financial situation into consideration, the panel cannot conclude on substantial compliance but would like to point out these circumstances being part of the national context and out of control of SQAA.

### **Conclusion**

Standard fulfilment: Partly compliant

## **ENQA CRITERION 4: ESG 3.5 MISSION STATEMENT**

### **STANDARD:**

Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

### **GUIDELINES:**

These statements should describe the goals and objectives of agencies' quality assurance processes, the division of labour with relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the cultural and historical context of their work. The statements should make clear that the external quality assurance process is a major activity of the agency and that there exists a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives. There

should also be documentation to demonstrate how the statements are translated into a clear policy and management plan.

### **Evidence**

The HEA, Article 51, sets out the functions and activities of the agency. In annexed document to the self-evaluation report, the panel finds evidence of publicly available documents where the mission, vision and values of the SQAA are presented. They read as follows:

### **Mission**

The Agency provides for development and operation of the quality assurance system in the Slovenian higher education area. It operates responsibly, both formally and contextually, and counsels all stakeholders and participants in tertiary education in line with European and global development trends.

### **Vision**

The Agency shall, with its system of quality assurance development, contribute to the higher education in Slovenia being of high quality in terms of education and research, internationally recognisable, competitive and equally integrated in the global higher education area.

### **Values**

The values of the SQAA are: independence, openness and transparency, commitment to progress, responsibility, professionalism and efficiency.

There are also published strategic objectives for the years 2011-2016:

- development and functioning of the quality assurance system;
- monitoring of progress and strengthening of higher education quality culture;
- presenting the role, importance and quality of operation of the Agency in the public for better recognition;
- co-creating and developing higher education policy in the area of quality;
- promoting the quality of transnational education;
- admission of the Agency to international associations (ENQA and EQAR);
- providing high-quality consulting services of the Agency by professionally qualified personnel.

### **Analysis**

The panel believes that the mission, vision, values and strategic objectives are clear and relevant for the SQAA. Statements of the agency should however be translated into a management plan. There is also room for improvement making the division of labour with relevant stakeholders more elaborated in official documents.



## **Conclusion**

Standard fulfilment: Substantially compliant

## **ENQA CRITERION 5: ESG 3.6 INDEPENDENCE**

### **STANDARD:**

Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

### **GUIDELINES:**

An agency will need to demonstrate its independence through measures, such as:

- its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments is guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative acts);
- the definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence;
- while relevant stakeholders in higher education, particularly students/learners, are consulted in the course of quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.

## **Evidence**

According to the HEA, SQAA is an independent and autonomous public body for quality assurance in higher education. Furthermore, the act stipulates the SQAA to be bound to principles of professionalism, impartiality, legality and political neutrality.

The Agency Council which is the highest decision-making body consists of eleven members that are appointed by stakeholders: three by the rectors' conference, one by the association of private higher education institutions, one by the association of higher vocational colleges, two by the student organisation, one by the employers' association, one by the unions from the field of higher education and two by the government.

Rectors and vice-chancellors of universities, deans, members of senates of universities, their members or independent higher education institutions, and directors of members of universities and other independent higher education institutions or other organisations providing higher education, or principals or directors of higher vocational colleges cannot be appointed as members of the Agency Council.

The tasks of the Agency Council are also defined in the HEA, Article 51h (described in section 3.3, Structure of SQAA). They include to decide on accreditations and evaluations and the procedures and criteria used in these processes. The Agency Council is also responsible for the appointment of expert groups for these accreditations and evaluations. The tasks of the Agency Council are also to appoint and dismiss the Director of the SQAA as well as members of the Appeals Committee.

The Director of the SQAA is responsible for the implementation of decisions adopted by the Agency Council but cannot interfere in any of the decisions. To further strengthen the independence aspect, the SQAA organisation include an Appeal Committee, which decides on appeals against decisions adopted by the Agency Council (duties of the Director and the Appeal Committee are further described in section 3.3, Structure of SQAA)

In order to prevent impartiality, all experts sign a statement of non-conflict of interest before their entry in the register of experts. These issues are also addressed, and needs to be declared by the expert, before their appointment to a group of experts.

### ***Analysis***

The panel found the legal basis for the agency to be very clear. It is the panel's opinion that the SQAA meets the criterion Independence in relation to higher education institutions, ministries as well as other stakeholders, taking into account that in a mainly publicly funded higher education system also the state can be considered as stakeholder. Although the agency has an extensive interaction with stakeholders, which should be commended, the panel is convinced that the set-up of the agency guarantees that the conduction of reviews and the final outcomes of accreditations and evaluations remain the responsibility of the SQAA.

Furthermore, the panel acknowledge the agency routines for avoiding conflict of interest, for experts but also for staff and Agency Council members. The panel also notes that the SQAA negotiating for its budget directly with the Ministry of Finance, further strengthen its independence towards the Ministry for Education, Science and Sports.

### ***Conclusion***

Standard fulfilment: Fully compliant

## ***ENQA CRITERION 6: ESG 3.7 EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE CRITERIA AND PROCESSES USED BY THE AGENCIES***

**STANDARD:**

The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

**GUIDELINES:**

Agencies may develop and use other processes and procedures for particular purposes. Agencies should pay careful attention to their declared principles at all times, and ensure both that their requirements and processes are managed professionally and that their conclusions and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even though the decisions are formed by groups of different people. Agencies that make formal quality assurance decisions or conclusions which have formal consequences should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.

***Evidence***

The SQAA accreditation and evaluation criteria were developed in consultation with external stakeholders and are publicly available on the agency's website (cf. section 4, ESG 2.3 in this report). SQAA provides the institutions with a template for the application of accreditation, which is also available on the website.

Annexed to the SQAA self-evaluation report, there is a publicly available Manual for Experts, which describes the six different accreditation and evaluation procedures (further elaborated in section 3.2, The main functions of SQAA). The task may vary somewhat depending on the type of procedure, but in general they all include groups of at least three experts, including a student member, appointed by the Agency Council (cf. section 4, ESG 2.4). The assessment is based on an application for accreditation and in some cases the yearly produced self-evaluation by the institution, is also part of the assessment material. In all cases, except for the initial programme accreditation, there is a site visit.

Experts' reports as well as the accreditation and evaluation decisions made by the Agency Council are published, except for the negative initial programme accreditations (cf. section 4, ESG 2.5).

Informal follow up procedures are in place but would need to be formally integrated in a future external evaluation model, where re-accreditation of programmes would be integrated in institutional accreditations (cf. section 4, ESG 2.6).

### *Appeals procedures*

The SQAA has an appeals procedure in place. According to the HEA, the Appeals Committee is appointed by the Agency Council and consist of three members. The decision of the appeal committee is final; however, an administrative dispute may be initiated against it. In 2013, the Appeals Committee decided on eleven matters, of which nine where in favour of the appellant.

### **Analysis**

A formalized follow up procedure is not in place, and would need to be integrated in a new quality assurance model, as proposed previously in the analysis of ESG 2.6. However, with the frequency of today's informal follow-ups, it could not be recommended to further extend these activities within the present legal framework and external quality assurance activities. As recommended previously, there is room for better integration and guidelines for the annual self-evaluation process and the accreditation applications made by the institutions, which is also under development by the SQAA (cf. section 4, ESG 2.4).

### **Conclusion**

Standard fulfilment: Substantially compliant

## **ENQA CRITERION 7: ESG 3.8 ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES**

### STANDARD:

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

### GUIDELINES:

These procedures are expected to include the following:

1. A published policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself, made available on its website;
2. Documentation which demonstrates that:
  - the agency's processes and results reflect its mission and goals of quality assurance;
  - the agency has in place, and enforces, a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts;
  - the agency has reliable mechanisms that ensure the quality of any activities and material produced by subcontractors, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance procedure are subcontracted to other parties;
  - the agency has in place internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from its own staff and council/board); an internal reflection mechanism (i.e. means to react to internal and external recommendations for improvement); and an external feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from experts and reviewed institutions for future development) in order to inform and underpin its own development and improvement.
3. A mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years.

## **Evidence**

There is a quality manual which defines the stakeholders of the agency and the methods of cooperation and communication with them. The quality manual also defines the organisation of the agency and the different duties of each category. As described previously, there are non-conflict-of-interest mechanisms for experts as well as staff and Council members (cf. section 4, ESG 2.4).

Each year the SQAA prepares a self-evaluation report to check the level of overall performance and efficiency of the agency's operation and to find opportunities for improvement of its operation according to part II and III of the ESG. The overall objective of the self-evaluation process is to improve the SQAA's internal quality assurance system, which, according to the agency, will contribute to the further development and improvement of the *external* quality assurance system. The self-evaluation is based on the annual action plan, which is prepared on the basis of the findings from previous self-evaluation report.

The SQAA also uses questionnaires, in order to measure satisfaction among stakeholders. The questions touches upon evaluation and accreditation procedures and criteria, site visits, the work of experts but also on the quality of work of staff, Agency management and Council.

According to the HEA, SQAA is required to undergo external evaluation "in conformity with EU standards".

## **Analysis**

During 2013, the SQAA went through an external evaluation for the register, EQAR. This resulted in developmental activities and interviews at site visit revealed that profound changes are being made of the quality manual. Many of the changes focus on the formalization of the already established self-evaluation process, which is conducted on a yearly basis.

The panel acknowledge the serious work of SQAA in its strive to improve both internal and external processes, performing a yearly self-evaluation processes as well as questionnaires sent to both internal (the Council, experts and staff) and external stakeholders. The panel is convinced that the on-going update of the quality manual will close the quality loop of the agency.

## **Conclusion**

Standard fulfilment: Fully compliant

## **ENQA CRITERION 8: CONSISTENCY OF JUDGEMENTS, APPEALS SYSTEM AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO AIMS OF ENQA**

- i. The Agency pays careful attention to its declared principles at all times, and ensures both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its judgements are reached in a consistent manner, even if the judgements are formed by different groups.
- ii. If the Agency makes formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, it should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of the Agency.
- iii. The Agency is willing to contribute actively to the aims of ENQA.

### **Evidence**

The SQAA has shown evidence of professionalism and dedication to quality enhancement of Slovenian higher education in the preceding sections. Measures are taken to ensure consistency in decisions, even though the panel sees room for improvements in developing a shared understanding of the criteria (cf. section 4, ESG 2.3). The SQAA also has a functioning appeals procedure in place.

The SQAA is active in international quality assurance organizations and projects and has participated in several ENQA activities.

### **Analysis**

The panel judges the SQAA to fulfil the requirements for this criterion. The panel sees an agency that will highly contribute to the aims ENQA. As shown in previous sections, the ambition and devotion in developing both external quality assurance processes and the internal quality procedures at institutions is a good example from others to learn from. The extensive dialogue with stakeholders is another good example from the SQAA and an important contribution to the ENQA community.

### **Conclusion**

Standard fulfilment: Fully compliant

## **5. CONCLUSION AND DEVELOPMENTS**

In short, the panel makes the following conclusions on SQAA compliance with the ENQA membership criteria:

ENQA Criterion 1a: ESG Part 2

ESG 2.1: Fully compliant  
ESG 2.2: Fully compliant  
ESG 2.3: Substantially compliant  
ESG 2.4: Fully compliant  
ESG 2.5: Substantially compliant  
ESG 2.6: Substantially compliant  
ESG 2.7: Fully compliant  
ESG 2.8: Fully compliant

ENQA Criterion 1b: ESG 3.1, 3.3

ESG 3.1: Substantially compliant  
ESG 3.3: Fully compliant

ENQA Criterion 2: ESG 3.2: Fully compliant  
ENQA Criterion 3: ESG 3.4: Partly compliant  
ENQA Criterion 4: ESG 3.5: Substantially compliant  
ENQA Criterion 5: ESG 3.6: Fully compliant  
ENQA Criterion 6: ESG 3.7: Substantially compliant  
ENQA Criterion 7: ESG 3.8: Fully compliant  
ENQA Criterion 8: Fully compliant

**The panel gives the following recommendations for improvement:**

ESG 2.1: SQAA might wish to provide institutions with more guidance for the preparation of the annual self-evaluation reports in order to cater for a more efficient integration into the agency's activities.

ESG 2.3: SQAA should strengthen its efforts to develop a shared understanding of criteria by developing and publishing official interpretation of certain criteria and regulations.

ESG 2.6: SQAA should establish a formalized follow-up procedure as regular part of the reviews. This is particularly important if the move to institutional reviews only materializes.

## ***5.1 Overall findings and conclusions***

After thorough analysis of the material submitted by SQAA for the review and after the various open, frank and informative discussions at the site visit the panel comes to the following overall conclusions:

SQAA, being founded in 2010 as successor of the National Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia is to be considered as a well-established quality assurance agency which is highly recognized by all stakeholders in the Slovenian higher education system. It is to be emphasized that the agency's role in the area of analytical work as regards higher education reforms in teaching

and learning and in particular as regards quality assurance related questions is highly appreciated by stakeholders which would even like to see that role of the agency being strengthened. This relates to a particularly positive feature of the agency which is the strong relationship with stakeholders. For this achievement SQAA is to be commended.

The Slovenian quality assurance system puts, by applying both cyclical reviews at programme level and at institutional level a heavy workload on the institutions. This is true so much the more as the institutions are additionally requested to submit annual self-evaluation reports. The panel welcomes the envisaged abolishment of programme re-accreditation and the focus on the institutional level. However, the panel finds it important to analyse the consequences of such a development by taking into account all existing procedures and tools i.e. the annual self-evaluation reports by the institutions. A clear definition of which of the various functions of quality assurance and quality enhancement should be supported by which tool or procedure should be found before modifying certain aspects of the whole system. This is particularly relevant as regards the comprehensive data collection from the institutions which is burdensome for the universities and only acceptable if the data is actually used in some way or another.

Within this rather comprehensive quality assurance framework SQAA is obviously a well-functioning quality assurance agency, conducting its reviews professionally and in substantial compliance with the ESG. The agency is to be commended for a strong developmental component in its reviews which goes beyond of what is known from many other accreditation procedures in the EHEA. The panel appreciated the high level of commitment by staff, management and members of the Council.

The panel wants to highlight the following points as areas for improvement:

- It seems obvious that additional efforts are necessary to develop a joint understanding and interpretation of criteria and regulation among all parties involved in quality assurance. This is already true for the collaboration within the agency. Shared views and joint understanding among staff and members of the Council are of utmost importance for consistent decision-making. This is in particular also true for the external relations of the agency. The institutions and stakeholders must have a secure and reliable basis as regards the meaning of criteria and regulations. In this respect the agency should also reconsider not to change the criteria as often as it was the case in the last two years.
- A second area for improvement lies in the follow-up of the reviews conducted by the agency. On the one hand, one can say that due to some specificities of the very comprehensive system, cyclical reviews at programme AND institutional level, annual self-evaluation reports by the institutions, there is not only a follow-up but even a constant evaluation of the institutions in place which somehow covers the follow-up function. On the other hand, this quasi - follow-up might not always cover all relevant outcomes of the reviews and this situation is going to change substantially with the abolishment of programme re-accreditation. This move needs to be accompanied by the introduction of a proper follow-up instrument.



- Thirdly, the panel raises a point of major concern which is the current financial situation of the agency. SQAA's budget is currently covered to the extent of approx. 60% by European Structural Funds which will expire in August 2015. Despite of optimistic views on this issue by the management and support by the ministry for higher education there was no security that the state budget will compensate for the European Funds in case they would not be prolonged. Since 14 out 24 staff are funded by European money this situation is a significant risk for the overall operations of SQAA. However, these circumstances are part of the national context and thus out of control of SQAA.

Therefore, as overall conclusion of the review the panel congratulates SQAA for its achievements and recommends the Board of ENQA to grant SQAA full membership.

**Annex 1 – Terms of Reference**

External review of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency (SQAA) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

**Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

June 2014

**1. Background and Context**

The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA) is an independent public body established by the Republic of Slovenia to assure quality in higher education and to carry out development and consulting activities in this field. The Agency took over the tasks of the Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia and started operations on 5 March 2010.

SQAA provides for the development and functioning of the quality assurance system in higher education in Slovenia. It operates responsibly in terms of form and contents and counsels all stakeholders and participants in tertiary education in line with the European and global directions of development.

SQAA shall, with its system of quality assurance development, contribute to the higher education in Slovenia being of high quality in terms of education and research, internationally recognisable, competitive and equally integrated in the global higher education area.

SQAA priority is the concern for the quality of Slovenian higher education as well as the integration into international environment and cooperation with relevant stakeholders while observing ESG.

SQAA is applying for the first time for ENQA Full membership.

**2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation**

This is a type A review, as defined in the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*. It will evaluate the way in which and to what extent SQAA fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will also provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether SQAA Full membership should be granted.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting Full Membership.

**3. The Review Process**

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;

- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-evaluation by SQAA including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- A site visit by the review panel to SQAA;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the Review Committee of the ENQA Board;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency.

### **3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members**

The review panel consists of five members: four external reviewers (one or two quality assurance experts, representative(s) of higher education institutions, student member) and a review secretary. Three of the reviewers (including the review secretary) are nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the national agencies, and are drawn from senior serving members of Board/Council or staff of ENQA member agencies. The fourth external reviewer is drawn from a nomination provided by the European University Association (EUA). The nomination of the student member is asked from the European Students' Union (ESU). One of the panel members serves as the chair of the review.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide SQAA with the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the SQAA review.

### **3.2 Self-evaluation by SQAA, including the preparation of a self-evaluation report**

SQAA is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-evaluation process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-evaluation is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-evaluation report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis;
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which SQAA fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the ESG.
- The self-evaluation report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat who has 4 weeks to pre-scrutinise before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre-scrutiny is to ensure that the self-evaluation report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but whether the necessary information, as stated on pages 8-9 in the *ENQA Guidelines for External Review of Quality Assurance Agencies*, is present. For the second and subsequent reviews, the agency is expected to enlist the recommendations provided in the previous review and to outline actions taken to meet these recommendations. In case the self-evaluation report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to reject the report and ask for a revised version within 4 weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1000 € will be charged to the agency.
- The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of eight weeks prior to the site visit.

### **3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel**

SQAA will draw up a draft proposal of the schedule for the site visit to be submitted to the review panel two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is 2 days. The approved schedule shall be given to SQAA one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by SQAA in arriving in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The site visit will close with an oral presentation and discussion of the major issues of the evaluation between the review panel and SQAA.

### **3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report**

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under article 2. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ENQA membership criteria. A draft will be submitted for comment to SQAA within two months of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If SQAA chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by SQAA, finalise the document and submit it to SQAA and ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

## **4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report**

SQAA will consider the expert panel's report and will publish it on its website once the ENQA Board had made its decision. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. SQAA commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting, if requested, a follow-up report to the ENQA Board. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website, in addition to the full review report and the Board's decision.

## **5. Use of the report**

ENQA shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in ENQA.

The review report is to be used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether SQAA has met the membership criteria/ESG.

The review report is to be considered as property of ENQA only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to SQAA and ENQA and until the decision by the Board is made, the report may not be used or relied upon by SQAA, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. SQAA may use the report at its discretion only after the Board decision has been made.

Should the review report be used for applying to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), the Chair of the panel shall remain available to respond to questions of clarification or further information from the EQAR Register Committee provided that the ENQA Secretariat is copied in all such requests.

## 6. Budget

SQAA shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,750 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,750 EUR
Fee of the 3 other panel members	8,250 EUR (2,750 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	5,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,250 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses (approximate)	6,000 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR for a review team of 5 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, SQAA will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to SQAA if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

In the event of a second site visit required by the Board and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as travel and subsistence costs are recoverable from the agency.

## 7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review	June 2014
Appointment of review panel members	July 2014
Self-evaluation completed	Beg July 2014
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	September 2014
Briefing of review panel members	October 2014
Review panel site visit	November 2014
Draft of evaluation report to SQAA	Beg January 2015
Statement of SQAA to review panel if necessary	Mid-January 2015
Submission of final report to ENQA	End January 2015
Consideration of the report by ENQA and response of SQAA	February 2015
Publication of report	February 2015

## Annex 2 - Programme of the site visit

### Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2014 (at City Hotel, Dalmatinova 15, Ljubljana)

No. of meeting	Time	Event	Participants
1	16.00 -18.30	Preparatory meeting of the panel	Review panel alone
	19.00	Dinner (to be arranged at Restaurant Most)	Review panel alone

### Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014 ( at SQAA Offices)

	8.30 – 8.45	Team gathering	8.15 Pick-up from the Hotel
2	8.45 – 9.15	Meeting with the Director of SQAA	Prof.Dr. <b>Ivan LEBAN</b> Director of SQAA from 2 April 2013
3	9.15 - 9.45	Meeting with the acting Head of Quality Department	<b>Tatjana DEBEVEC</b> Area Secretary
	9.45 - 10.00	Debriefing	Review panel alone
4	10.00 – 10.45	Meeting with the SQAA team responsible for SER	<b>Klemen ŠUBIC</b> Area III Senior Adviser Mag. <b>Jernej ŠIROK</b> Area II Senior Adviser <b>Martina MRAVLJA</b> Area Adviser III
	10.45 – 11.00	Debriefing and Coffee Break	Review panel alone
5	11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with the President and SQAA Council Members	Dr. <b>Aleš ROTAR</b> Vice-President of SQAA Council, appointed by Employers' association of Slovenia Prof.Dr. <b>Lucija ČOK</b> Member, appointed by Slovenian Rectors Conference Slovenia Prof.Dr. <b>Jernej LETNAR ČERNIČ</b> Member, appointed by Association of independent higher education institutions Dr. <b>Anita GOLTNIK-URNAUT</b> Member, appointed by Representative association of higher vocational colleges <b>Alen BRKIČ</b> Student-member, appointed by Slovenian Student Union in cooperation with the student councils
	12.00 – 12.15	Debriefing	Review panel alone

	12.15 – 13.15	Buffet Lunch	Review panel alone
6	13.15 – 14.15	Meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport	<p><b>Darinka VREČKO</b> Ministry of Education, Science and Sport Prof.Dr. <b>Jernej PIKALO</b> former Minister for Education, Science and Sport Dr. <b>Mišela MAVRIČ</b> former acting head of Directorate for Higher Education at the Ministry Dr. <b>Meta DOBNIKAR</b> former acting head of Directorate for Higher Education at the Ministry Mag. <b>Alenka LISEC</b> Head of the ENIC-NARIC Center</p>
	14.15 – 14.30	Debriefing	Review panel alone
7	14.30 – 15.30	Meeting with representatives of the universities, HE institutions and Higher Vocational Colleges	<p>Prof.Dr. <b>Danijel REBOLJ</b> Rector, University of Maribor (on Skype) Prof.Dr. <b>Dragan MARUŠIČ</b> Rector, University of Primorska Prof.Dr. <b>Danilo ZAVRTANIK</b> Rector, University of Nova Gorica Prof.Dr. <b>Maja MAKOVEC BRENCIČ</b> Vice-Rector, University of Ljubljana Prof.Dr. <b>Rasto OVIN</b> Dean, DOBA Faculty Maribor Dr. Silva <b>RONCELLI VAUPOT</b> Director, University College of Health Science</p>
	15.30 – 15.45	Debriefing and Coffee Break	Review panel alone
8	15.45 – 16.45	Meeting with Quality Assurance Managers of the universities, HE institutions and Higher Vocational Colleges	<p>Prof.Dr. <b>Goran TURK</b> University of Ljubljana Prof.Dr. <b>Iztok ARČON</b> University of Nova Gorica Mag. <b>Alenka ANDREJAŠIČ</b> University of Primorska Mag. <b>Hermína Pika RADMILOVIČ</b> University of Maribor Dr. <b>Mateja GEDER</b> DOBA Faculty, Maribor Dr. <b>Alicia-Leonor SAULI-MIKLAVČIČ</b> HVC, Technical School Center, Maribor</p>
9	16.45 – 17.30	Meeting with representatives of other stakeholders involved in HE	<p>Prof.Dr. <b>Tadej BAJD</b> President, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts Mag. <b>Samo HRIBAR MILIČ</b> President, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia Prof.Dr. <b>Peter JAMBREK</b> Slovenian sociologist, jurist and politician <b>Tomaž WRABER</b> President, Association of Blind and Partially Sighted of Slovenia <b>Tina KRISTAN</b> Journalist, covering HE area, Daily Newspaper DELO <b>Dr. Janez POSEDI</b> Trade Union »Pergam« Slovenia</p>
	17.30 – 18.00	Debriefing and Wrap-up of day one	Review panel alone
	19.00	Working Dinner (arranged elsewhere)	Review panel alone



Tuesday, 18 <sup>th</sup> November 2014 (at SQAA Offices)			
	8.45 – 9.00	Team gathering	8.15 Pick-up from the Hotel
10	9.00 – 9.30	Meeting with the Chair of Appeal Committee	Em. Prof.Dr. <b>Dragica WEDAM LUKIĆ</b>
	9.30 – 9.45	Debriefing	Review panel alone
11	9.45 – 10.45	Meeting with the SQAA professional staff	Dr. <b>Matjaž ŠTUHEC</b> Quality <b>Tatjana HORVAT</b> Quality <b>Anita KAJTEZOVIĆ</b> Quality <b>Andrej KRČEK</b> Quality <b>Barbara ZUPANČIČ KOČAR</b> General Affairs <b>Maja MILAS</b> General Affairs, Quality
	10.45 – 11.00	Debriefing and Coffee Break	Review panel alone
12	11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with the students representatives of universities, HE institutions and Higher Vocational Colleges	<b>Rok HRŽIČ</b> Student <b>Mitja URBANC</b> Student <b>Zlatko RATEJ</b> Student <b>Nejc MEDVED</b> Student  <b>Žiga SCHMIDT</b> President Students' Union of Slovenia <b>Rok PRIMOŽIČ</b> Former President of ESU
13	12.00 – 13.00	Meeting with the group of SQAA experts including 2 student-experts	<b>Igor JESIH</b> Student <b>Taja ŽELEZNIK</b> Student Prof.Dr. <b>Marinka DROBNIČ KOŠOROK</b> <b>Bastian BAUMANN</b> Foreign Expert Prof.Dr. <b>Dušan KRNEL</b> Prof.Dr. <b>Andreja CIRMAN</b> Prof.Dr. <b>Bojan DOLŠAK</b>
	13.00 – 15.00	Final discussion of Review panel to discuss the main lines of report - Buffet Lunch at SQAA	Review panel alone
14	15.00 - 15.15	Final Meeting with the Director of SQAA	Prof.Dr. <b>Ivan LEBAN</b>
15	15.15 - 15.30	Short Review-panel feedback to SQAA	Staff of the Agency and Some Guests
	15.30	Departure of the Review panel	Transfer by mini-bus to the Ljubljana Airport